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REFERENCES

Claude CALAME, *La Tragédie chorale : poésie grecque et rituel musical*, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 2017. 1 vol. 15 × 21,5 cm, 254 p. (*Mondes anciens*, 4). ISBN : 978-2-251-44704-9.

- 1 For any teacher of Greek tragedy, whether in Greek or in English, who has confronted student confusion on the role of the tragic chorus, or has been confronted by an obstinate interrogation on the 'tragic flaw', or similar anachronistic approach to Greek tragedy, this new work of a long-established scholar of choral poetry will be an essential help-mate. Claude Calame (C.) brings an approach to the tragic chorus that is at once semantic, ethno-poetic and one of cultural anthropology, to attain a better understanding of 'the practical reference of a fictional world set in the *here and now* of a musical and ritual performance' (p. 13). This bold and important study consists of a 'methodological prelude' and seven chapters.
- 2 In chapter 1, *Le "Tragique" en substance*, the A. reviews the Romantic understanding of 'the tragic' that largely arose from over-reading Aristotle, and that still persists among some critics today, and turns back to seek definitions of *tragoidia* in contemporary witnesses, particularly in Greek Comedy in its occasional critique of tragedy and tragedians. Whatever the origin of 'the tragic' (Gr. τὸ τραγικόν) C. makes a compelling case that the original association of tragedy is fundamentally choral (p. 41). In this effective survey of the evidence from Comedy (particularly Aristophanes' *Frogs*, *Women at the Thesmophoria* and *Acharnians*), C. draws attention to the language used of Tragedy, particularly its instructive function (p. 41-42 on the language associated with the *choros* are particularly revealing).
- 3 Chapter 2, *Tragédie, culte et rituel*, is a complex, deeply learned study of the ritual in tragedy and tragedy as ritual. Moving away from the Romantic reception of Aristotle,

here C. rather follows the intellectual path of in particular P. Vernant and P. Vidal-Naquet to approach tragedy as musical spectacle and as an integral part of a religious festival, the *Greater Dionysia*. “Il faut donc restituer à la tragédie attique le spectacle, le concours poétique, les *Grandes Dionysies*, en un mot la performance musicale : la fiction tragique s’offre comme un enchaînement de séquences musicales.” In the following pages the A. considers ritual in tragedy (the hymns of Euripides’ *Ion*, the language and imagery of sacrifice in the parodos of the *Agamemnon* and in Euripides’ *Iphigenia at Aulis*, and then comes to a very important discussion of tragedy in cult performance; the reader is well reminded of the involvement of the entire city in the festival itself — by reading our surviving texts as ‘literature’ we are deprived of the political, musical and indeed spectacle reality of Greek Tragedy).

- 4 In Chapter 3, *Polyphonies chorales et tragédie*, the A. explores the mediatory role the chorus assumes in the orchestra between the heroic action that takes place on the stage and the ‘here and now’ of the contemporary Athenian audience. The chorus takes part in the action on the stage, and at the same time views this action as an audience; thus the chorus (p. 101) has both a fictional identity, in that it takes part in the action on-stage, and a political and ritual identity, in that it takes part in a city religious festival. Particularly illuminating is the A.’s explication of the multiple voices of the tragic chorus: ‘performative’ in that through song performance of traditional *melē* the chorus takes part in the heroic action; ‘affective’ in the chorus’ use of metical and dance patterning (in other words the chorus ‘sets the mood’ for audience reaction) and ‘hermeneutic’ in that the chorus acts in an ethical or interpretative manner through its appeal to paradigm, analogy etc. to evaluate the action on-stage. C.’s reading of the choral language of Aeschylus’ *Eumenides* is essential reading for anyone teaching the play. Throughout the A. lays emphasis on the role of ‘song-making’ (Gr. *μελοποιία*), in many aspects of Greek culture, a heritage now largely lost to us; C.’s reading of one of Pindar’s *partheneia* (fr. 94b SM) is especially revealing in terms of his analysis of the fragment’s 1st person language and use of *deixis*.
- 5 Chapter 4, *Les Perses d’Eschyle : l’identité chorale en question*, is the first of three chapters in which the A. considers the choruses in extant tragedies from the perspectives established thus far in this study. As the A. correctly emphasizes, the *Persians* is an unusual play in that many in the audience of 472 may have had direct experience of the Persian War. C. makes a convincing case (esp. p. 144–146) that Aeschylus evades the mistake committed by the tragedian Phrynichus (whose *Siege of Miletus* had greatly distressed his Athenian audience) by setting a Greek tragedy in Susa, where a Greek tragic hero, here Xerxes, through an act of *hybris* (forcing the border of Asia and Europe) brings catastrophe upon his people. There results the paradox that the long *threnos* that concludes the drama is a Greek ritual lament, in poetic (i.e. Doric) Greek, for the Persian dead. The chorus of the *Persians* is, as the A. well highlights, all but the central actor in the drama; in this case a ‘traditional’ perception of Greek tragedy as centered on the tragic hero surely misses the point (p. 132).
- 6 In Chapter 5, *L’Hippolyte d’Euripide : le chant choral marqué par le ‘genre’*, C., a scholar whose extensive work on both the poetics of Eros and the poetry of young girls (*partheneia*) is of seminal importance, turns his attention to the choral song of a play that presents the modern reader with a certain amount of confusion in terms of gender roles. The Athenian ephebes who are the chorus members appear in the play both as young male companions of Hippolytus and as Trozenian women. Hippolytus, who

scorns Aphrodite, is a *dévot* of Artemis, to whom, with a chorus of young men, he offers a garland as symbol of purity; Phaedra, his stepmother, although married to Theseus and mother of children (lines 313–315) the chorus of Trozenian women treat as a young girl (line 141, κοῦρα), as C. correctly observes (p. 155). C. is especially good in this chapter on the problematic third stasimon (p. 162–168), making an illuminating gendered reading of the ode that allows for a chorus comprised of *both* the young companions of Hippolytus and the Trozenian women. On the etiological rite that Artemis confers on Hippolytus (lines 1423–30) C. makes the excellent observation (p. 168) of its relevance to Hippolytus: “*Institué en rituel prématrimonial accompli par des jeunes filles, le processus d’immortalisation héroïque et musicale voulu par la déesse consacre définitivement l’inversion des marques sexuelles qui a déterminé l’action du jeune Hippolyte tout au long de la tragédie.*”

- 7 Chapter 6, *L’Edipe-Roi de Sophocle: ‘pourquoi danser en cœur?’* begins with the sage observation that treatments of this play too often can respond to Freud’s articulation of Oedipal desire rather than the cultural artifact of the 5th cent. Athenian stage. And, too, Aristotle’s preference for this play and its μ????, with the gradual unwinding of its ὄθος, with the gradual unwinding of its *peripeteia*, has had a role in causing many modern readers to undervalue the choral odes. Yet as C. makes clear through a series of carefully nuanced readings of the choral odes, it is the chorus that effects a ritual, even theological accomplishment of the heroic action carried out on stage. As the *Greater Dionysia* is a religious festival, so the choral odes of the *Oedipus Tyrannus* give the Athenian audience “an understanding of man’s destiny as revealed through Oedipus’ experience, a human identity founded on a destiny of divine order that Zeus guarantees and Apollo reveals” (p. 200). The ritual character of the parodos, continually reinforced in almost every choral ode, effects a religious ‘response’ to the action onstage; the play can only really be understood through its choral odes.
- 8 In the final chapter of the study, *Poètes, dictions et fictions tragiques*, C. considers the relationship of tragedy to other types of choral song, a heritage which we can now only very tenuously grasp, as so much of this poetry has been lost. Choral melic representation of mythological narrative is, as C. demonstrates, a revealing analogy. Through a careful reading in particular of the Lille Stesichorus fragment, C. makes a very compelling case for choral melic poetry as a crucial origin of the tragic performances the Ancient Greeks observed. C.’s concluding comparison of tragedy with oratorio is particularly well chosen.
- 9 I conclude this review on a perhaps unusual note. Claude Calame’s *La Tragédie Chorale* is a very important contribution that should ideally be available to as many of those who teach Greek tragedy as possible — this is a far larger group of people than just professional Classicists, who can easily read the French text. It is very much to be hoped that this study might appear one day in an English translation — I can imagine it being widely used for course preparation at many levels, as well as for training in theater.

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